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Don't blame the CIA!

Once again the United States is caught in the middle, this time between Greece and Turkey, in the tense situation that has developed because the Turkish area of Cyprus has declared itself independent of the rest of the island's government.

What the eastern Mediterranean does not need right now is still another confrontation of traditional enemies.

The Greeks and the Turks have been more or less hostile for generations.

Cyprus is predominantly Greek, but with a large Turkish minority. It is a perfect locale for still another of the power struggles that are convulsing so much of the world.

Washington is reported to be "dismayed" by this latest development. It must be hoped that this report is inaccurate.

Too often in recent years this country has been taken by surprise.

Whenever this happens, there is criticism of the CIA in and out of Congress.

Yet, for years, the CIA itself has been the object of restrictions which are bound to make it difficult for it to do what it is meant to do, keep this government informed about what is going on in parts of the world which are important to U.S. interests.

Despite this country's fascination with James Bond, it has always been uneasy about whatever form of Secret Service the government has employed.

It must, in fact, recognize that whatever its name, some form of espionage is necessary as a measure of self-protection.

This became especially obvious after World War II when the decline in Britain's resources and prestige made the United States the principal guardian of freedom everywhere in the world.

For a time Congress and the people

tacitly accepted the necessity of expanding the role of the U.S. Secret Service, or the CIA.

But during the last decade, and especially in the wake of the Vietnam War, the CIA was one of the main victims of the desire of the public to withdraw from what a generation ago would have been called foreign entanglements.

The nation is suffering from the effects of several years in which the CIA has been consistently played down, criticized and restricted.

It is suffering from those effects in the form of our surprise at each new crisis anywhere in the world.

Judging by the reports from Washington, the crisis on Cyprus is only the latest of these.

It is to be hoped that this country will be able to avoid any serious involvement in the affairs of Cyprus. Certainly it has enough commitments already in that part of the world.

But it should be able to keep itself informed on what is brewing in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean as well as in Central America and the Caribbean.

It should not be taken off-guard and forced to improvise policies.

In other words, it should have a Secret Service adequate to its needs.

For Secret Service, read CIA.

It is unfair to do everything possible to denigrate the CIA, and then complain because it is not able to do what it has been prevented from doing.

The world being what it is, the CIA is a necessary branch of the government.

It should be accepted as such, and given the resources it needs to do its necessary job.

If it is, there is no reason to think Washington will be dismayed when the next crisis in some one of the world's troubled areas breaks out.